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The Holy Penitent : Or, The History of

# MARY MAGDALEN, *Saint*

<sup>K</sup>Set forth in her Birth and Parontage ; her most wicked Course of Living, and as wonderful Conversation after she was posses'd of Seven Devils by our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; her exemplary Piety when she embrased Christianity ; and the Manner of her Godly Death and Burial. Being useful in all Christians Families.



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*The History of Mary, Magdalen, &c.*

MARY MAGDALEN was born in a country village called Magdala. which became a city, where the inhabitants still shew the house of Mary Magdalen. Upon the west and north side of this city, there lies a great and spacious plain preserved only for pasture, and which St Mark the evangelist calls Dalmanutha, that is to say, *drawn dry or a poor and naked Habitation*, being derived of Delal, he hath made me dry, and moon, a house or a dwelling place. It may be a notable figure in the christian church, which in this world may rightly be said to have a poor habitation, but yet is right Magdalen, that is, a strong and impregnable tower, against which the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail. Also it is to be observed, that this city of Magdala belonged to the tribe of Issachar; or the borders whereof, and Dalmanutha the pharises and Saduces tempted our blessed Saviour Christ, they demanded a sign from Heaven according to the words of St. Matthew, chap. 16, v. 1.

Her Parents being godly persons, they took great care to bring up this their youngest child from her infancy in the paths of virtue, and till she was about twelve years of age, such piety, goodness and modesty eminently shin'd in all her actions, that she gave most promising hopes of becoming the glory of her sex, for all religious acts; for she was stedfast to the faith in which she was bred obedient to her father and mother; humble in her actions; and very charitable to such as were in want.

But her parents unhappily changing this mortal life for another, before Mary Magdalen reach'd

the 13th year of her age, and leaving her very rich, her riches, and extraordinary beauty was the Occasion of bringing several able jews to be her suitors, then all striving who should gain the greatest esteem in her affection, nothing was wanting in her admires to entertain her according as their estates would permit them in rich banquets, great presents, delicious musick and fine balls, insomuch that these temptations working strangely on the inclination of her youthfulness, and being daily inclining in voluptuous pleasures, her former devotion soon grew cold; and by keeping so vicious company she soon from a modest virgin became a common courtesan or strumper.

Now giving herself over to all sensuality, nothing but riotous actions is her chiefest recreation, and now to early slighting the worth and excellency of her immortal soul, she's so ungrateful to her grateful creator to make all the blessings which he hath bestow'd upon her in this world the opportunity of displaying her vanities. Thus she continued most notoriously wicked till she was about thirty years of age, when her vicious enormities making her captive to the powers of hell. She was possess'd with seven devils, besides the affliction of other infirmities, and such was the exceeding goodness of our blessed Lord and Saviour, while he was upon earth to perform the redemption of mankind from eternal destruction, that taking compassion on this most miserable Woman, and the greatest sinner then living, he vouchsafed not only to heal her infirmities, but disposes her of the devils which greatly tormented her most vile body.

Then for some retaliation for this unmerited favour, she became a true Penitent and unfeignedly repenting from the bottom of her heart of all her manifold sins and transgressions. Nay, after her miraculous Conversation she minister'd to Christ, who being in the



house of Simon, St. Luke the Evangelist tells us, that behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointments, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with Tears, and did wipe them with ointment, Chap 7. v. 37, 38. then she being upbraided by a Pharisee for being a sinner, the same evangelist tells us again, that our Saviour turning to this Woman, he said unto Simon, seeest thou this Woman; I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no Water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my Feet. Mine head with Oil thou didst not anoint, but this Woman hath anointed my Feet with ointments. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which were many are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy faith hath saved thee, go in Peace. Chap. 7 v. 44 45. &c.

This Mary Magdalen was the Sister of that Martha, who was encumber'd about worldly things, as St. Luke the Evangelist tells us these words. Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha, received him into the House. And she had a sister called Mary, which always sat at Jesus's Feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumber'd about with much foreing and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left to serve thee alone. Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many Things. But one Thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken from her Luke, Chap. 10. v. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

The place where this conversation of Mary Magdalen was brought, was in Bethany, which City was the tipe the Church, is always subject to the crose, and exposed to e'ry Calamity; and therefore is call'd Bethania, that is the house of Sorrow and Affliction, being derived of Baleth, signifying a house, and Oni, signifying Affliction. According to the prophecy of our saviour, who foretold the afflictions and tribulations, that should fall upon his church. you shall mourn, but you shall be comforted, and your grief shall be turn'd into Joy. It was distant from Jerusalem almost two miles towards the South-East. Borearcus the monk observed, that close by a well about a stones cast out of the town, there is shewed the place where Martha met our Saviour Christ when he came to Bethany, and a little after call'd her sister Mary Magdalen to meet him.

There is also shewn in this town, the house of Simon the Leper, where a certain woman having an Alabaster box of precious ointment, poured it on our Saviour's head, not without great indignation of his disciples. There is also to be seen the house of Martha to which our Saviour did oftentimes resort, and in that place there is at this day a church built in honour of these two sisters, Martha and Mary Magdalen which were the Sisters of Lazarus. There is also the Sepulchre out of which Lazarus was raised, after he had been dead and buried 3 days from death to life, which stands close by the said church, and over it is built a chapel of marble, very decent and comely. And the Saracens hold this chapel in great estimation.

You cannot see the city of Jerusalem from Bethany, because of the mount of Olives, but as soon as you ascend a little hill in the way you go thence to Jerusalem, you may discern mount Sion, and

a part of the city ; and when you are descended from that hill, the City is again hidden. After that upon the left side of the mount olive, some stones cast from Bethpage, you do leave a small village standing under the mountain of offence, where Solomon in times past committed idolatry, and from this village the ass and the colt were brought unto Christ.

Not far from thence, upon the South-side as you go upon the mount of mount o ives you come unto the place where Christ mounted upon the Ass ; and a little after you may see the whole city of Jerusalem with Solomon's temple ; and the church of the holy Sepulcher, with many other holy Place.

*After the Conversion of Mary Magdalen, such was her extraordinary Faith, that she believed Christ was the Son of God. Her obedience the doctrine of Jesus inspired her divine Son to be a constant practitioner of it thro' the Remainder of her days in imitation of him was obedient even to an ignominious death on the Cross. She was also endu'd with the true Christian Humility, which by a strong Apprehension lays hold on the Mercy of God towards us, makes our Sins more odious even in our own Eyes, no otherwise than the tender Kindness of his Father, made the prodigal Child more clearly see his own Error and Disobedience. Thus the Regenerated good Christian (like Mary Magdalen) being once entered into the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ sees more clearly his Sins than he did before his falling, and having received a greater Light, the Excellency of his Virtue in all good Christians is beyond Expression, and it was with good Reasons that St. Jerom, a learned Father of the Church stil'd this the Treasure of all other Virtues. -- The Primitive Christians commonly usurp Humility for Virtue itself ; and Christ calling Poorness of Spirit and discoursing on the Beauty of Man, he sets it in the Front of all his Benedictions. The great Delight and Pleasure which she took in*



*Humility and Obedience, would make her often say after Christs Sufferings to those about her. My dear Friends and Fellow servants, I do greatly desire and endeavour (as near as human Frailty will give me leave) to imitate my sweetest Saviour, whose profound Humility and perfect Obedience can never be sufficiently extoll'd. Full well humility to make the first step to eternal Life; Obedience the second, the former of which to teach all Men he descended from Heaven, the latter to demonstrate, he became obedient to his Father even to the sufferings of Death upon the Cross, not only to take away my sins, but also the Sins of the whole World.*

New I beheld Mary Magdalen's Charity which was unparallel'd as having no respect himself, by Seeing only intente on the good of another. It was Charity that withdrew her from the Pleasures of the World to retrieve her former Goodness. It was Charity added Wings to her Feet to look after our Saviour's Body in the Sepulcher, it was Charity compell'd her to attend on her dying Saviour whilst he was bleeding on the Cross, it was Charity often caus'd her to run and tell Peter that they had taken away the Lord out of the Sepulcher, And lastly it was Charity forc'd her to love all that lov'd Christ.

Mary Magdalen was present at the Death of our Holy Redeemer, with the Virgin Mary, and her Sister Mary Cleophas, where with great Amazement and Sadness her Heart was surpriz'd to see our Saviour's sacred Body trembling, torn and pierced, besmear'd with his own Blood, and hung between two Thieves. However her Sorrow was much asswaged by her Faith, which assur'd her of his Resurrection. The Holy Spirit certified her, this was not a destroying Death but a Triumphant one with an unshaken Confidence, and a true internal Valour she beheld His Body Scourg'd, and his Hands and Feet nailed to the Cross, yet sometimes the Strings of her relenting mournful Heart was ready to break with the Thoughts of his cruel Tortures and Afflictions; But as often again they were strengthen'd and comforted with a full Assurance that he should overcome them all, and Death itself. She stood here the Son of God only excepted, the Prime Pattern of Solid Faith and constant Patience to all Posterity, in that neither the Scourge, nor Death itself could divide her from her Saviour. Her Carriage and Behaviour was beyond the Level of Censure, and in all Things suitable to the Modesty and Gravity of such a pious Woman. She fear'd not all the Fury of the Jewish Soldiers that

environed her, but stood secure and faced Danger. Tho' she was an Eye Witness of his Passion and saw his Limbs distended and rack'd, yet did not the Evils she saw wound her so deep as those which pierc'd her Ears, when she heard him, that was without any Sin called a Drunkard, a Blasphemer, a Breaker of the Sabbath, a Lover of Publicans and Sinners, nay a very Devil who was her and Gods Delight. Yet did not all these killing Objects, these Impious Slanders, drive her into the merciless Gripses of Despair; for she was confident that the two Persons in the Trinity would not forsake the third. Now Malanction commending this most tragical Story to our sad and serious Contemplation, he advises us, that when Tribulations and Death itself comes upon us, we imitate this good Woman, who mix'd a Heart killing sorrow for Christ as to Death, with a joyful Assurance of his Resurrection.

And truly, when our blessed Lord and Saviour arose in the third Day from Death to Life, he honoured Mary Magdalen with his first Appearance to her, which added great Joy to her Soul, especially when after his 40 Days rest hence on Earth, she saw his triumphant Ascension from Mount Oliver into Heaven.

Afterwards Mary Magdalen liv'd retir'd from the World having Conversation with none but Christ's Apostles, and those whom they converted to the Christian Faith; every Day she must devoutly spend in Meditation and Prayer, till at last a violent Fever seiz'd on her; she in the Time of her Visitation was sensible to the last, concluding the Catastrophe of her Life with a most holy and pious End, she died in the 56th Year of her age, generally lamented by all by all those of Christ's Church, and was honourably buried in the City of Magdala where she was born, as is above noted. And in the commemoration of her great Sanctuary and Holiness, the 22d of July is observed in the Kalender of the Church of England.

F I N I S.

